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ARTS & CULTURE

Spring Edition



**GUSTAV KLIMT: THE
BALANCE BETWEEN
BEAUTY AND
VULNERABILITY**

**FRAGILITY IN THE
CINEMA OF WIM
WENDERS**

**THE FRAGILITY
BEHIND MUSIC**

**NOAH KAHAN
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EDITORIAL

The Arts & Culture Magazine is the meeting place of some of the creative minds of Nova Awareness Club. Following last semester's magazine about image, visuals, and film, our team decided to pick another theme for this semester.

The Arts & Culture Magazine is, once again, a meeting place of different voices, perspectives, and ways of looking at the world. After last semester's focus on art and power, this edition turns towards something more subtle, yet just as urgent: fragility.

We often associate fragility with weakness, with something that needs to be fixed, hidden, or overcome. Yet, if we look more closely, we begin to realize that what matters most in our lives is, in fact, fragile. Fragile are the balances that sustain political systems, the bodies we inhabit, the relationships we build, the trust we place in the future. Fragile are peace, identity, attention, and connection.

Fragility, then, is not an exception of our time, but one of its defining conditions.

As sociologist Zygmunt Bauman suggests in his reflection on a "liquid modernity", we live in an age marked by uncertainty, instability, and constant exposure. In this context, fragility is no longer something accidental, but structural. It shapes not only our personal experiences, but also the way we relate to the world and to one another.

Rather than something to resist, fragility can also be understood as something that asks for attention. Simone Weil describes attention as "the rarest and purest form of generosity". To pay attention, to truly see, to listen without distraction, is already a form of care. In a society where attention is constantly fragmented, accelerated, and commodified, choosing to slow down becomes, in itself, an ethical act.

It is within this tension, between exposure and care, instability and meaning, that this edition unfolds. Each contribution approaches fragility from a different angle, showing how deeply it is embedded in both artistic expression and everyday life.

The Arts & Culture Magazine is the meeting place of some of the creative minds of Nova Awareness Club. Following last semester's magazine about image, visuals, and film, our team decided to pick another theme for this semester.

In her exploration of Gustav Klimt's work, Inês Alvelos reflects on fragility as a tension between beauty and vulnerability, where what is most radiant is also what is most exposed. Through cinema, Filipa Torres looks at the films of Wim Wenders, where fragility emerges in silence, in attention, and in the space between people. Leonor Homem, through music, reminds us that vulnerability is not only expressed, but shared, shaping both artistic creation and the way we, as listeners, feel and interpret the world. Continuing through music, Matilde Lopes explores Noah Kahan's work as a raw portrayal of addiction, instability, and emotional exposure, showing how fragility can emerge not only from pain itself, but from the courage to name it honestly.

Finally, this edition moves beyond artistic forms and brings fragility back into our everyday reality. In *The Loneliness Epidemic*, Inês Rebelo explores the fragility of human connection in a world increasingly shaped by speed, distraction, and digital mediation. What emerges is not only a reflection on isolation, but a deeper question about attention, presence, and belonging. In a time where connection is constantly available yet often insufficient, fragility reveals itself in the spaces where relationships fail to fully form, where attention is lost, and where presence becomes rare.

In this sense, fragility is not only something we observe in art, but something we are called to protect in our lives. It asks us to slow down, to pay attention, and to recognize the value of what is easily overlooked.

Ultimately, this edition invites you to look at fragility not as something that simply breaks, but as something that, precisely because it is exposed, vulnerable, and uncertain, carries meaning. Fragility is what makes things matter. It is what connects us, what moves us, and what reminds us of our responsibility towards one another.

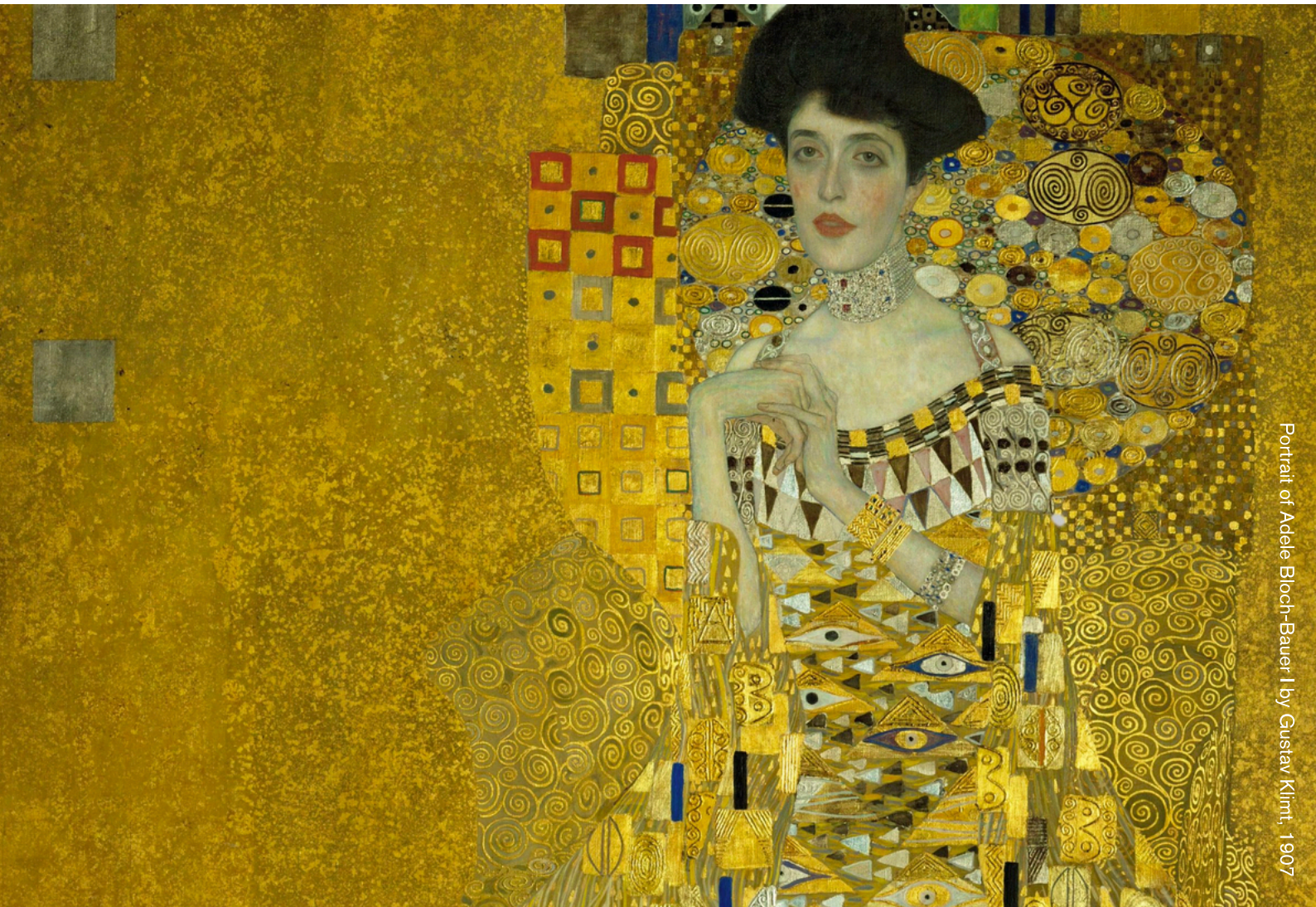
Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Arts & Culture Magazine: we hope it invites you not only to reflect, but also to pay attention.

- Giulia Randon

BY INÊS ALVELOS

THE BALANCE BETWEEN BEAUTY AND VULNERABILITY

GUSTAV KLIMT:



Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I by Gustav Klimt, 1907

Gustav Klimt's work portrays fragility as a tension between beauty and vulnerability, revealing humanity to be both radiant and exposed. His paintings are characterised by gold and ornamentation, but beneath that luminous surface lies a persistent awareness of just how fragile life is, and of how easily the body, identity, memory, and desire can fracture.

Rather than hiding this fragility, Klimt elevates it, transforming vulnerability into force.

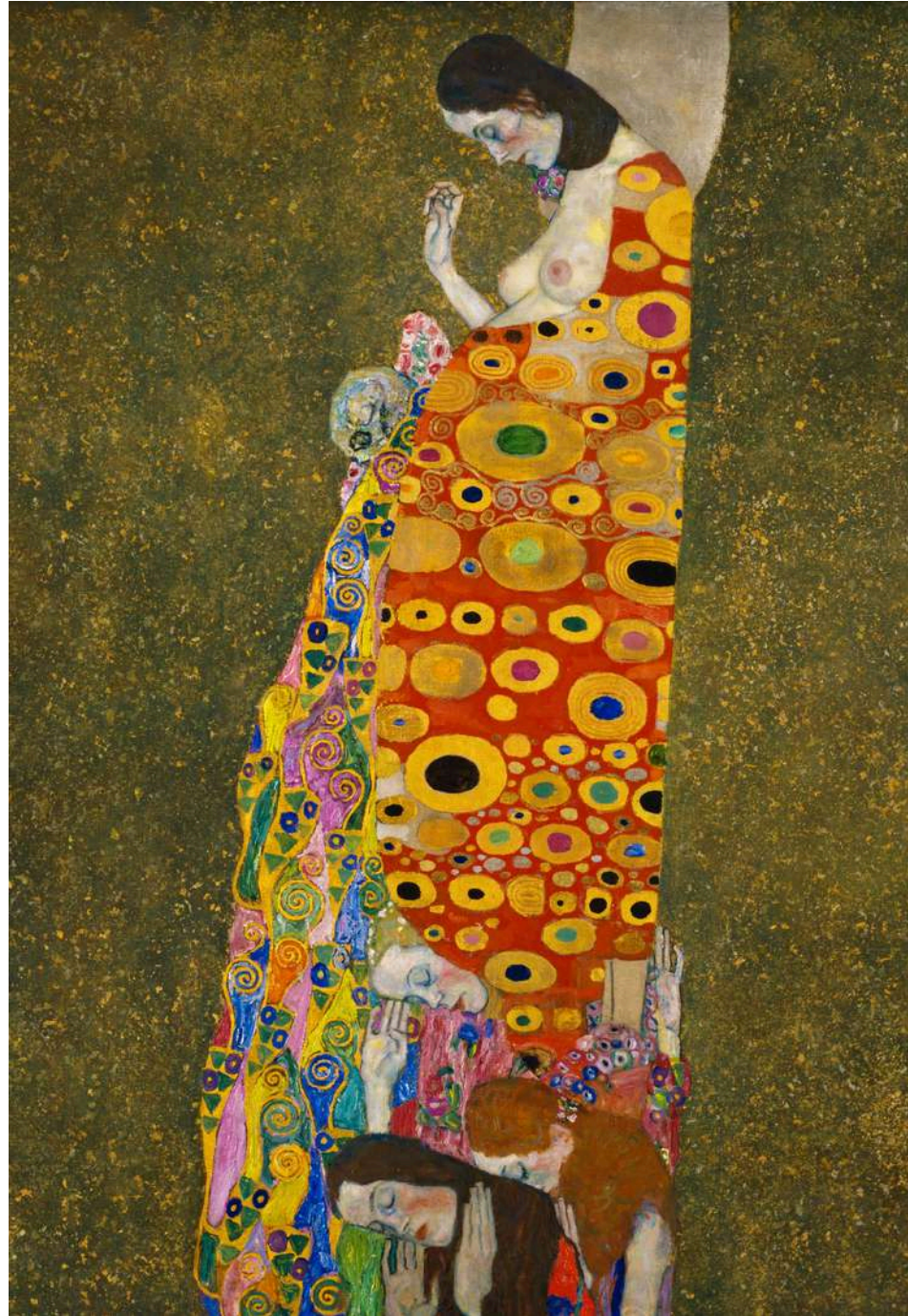
Fragility stops being a sign of weakness and becomes a way of seeing. It is the acknowledgement that the most precious things are also the most vulnerable.

This becomes especially powerful when we consider the feminine presence in Klimt's work. Women are not only central figures in his compositions, but also the carriers of meaning, emotion and tension.

Through them, Klimt explores the body as a place of creation, desire, transformation and vulnerability. The feminine becomes the place where fragility is most evident and profound, not because women are weak, but because they embody life in its most intense and complex forms. In his work, the female figure embodies the contradictions of existence: strength and delicacy, intimacy and risk, beauty and uncertainty.

This is especially clear in *Hope II* (1907–1908), one of Klimt's most striking reflections on the fragility of the body. The pregnant woman stands upright, her belly round and luminous. However, she is surrounded by the

Hope II by Gustav Klimt, 1907–1908



spectral faces of death and suffering. Life and death coexist in the same frame, not as opposites but as interlinked forces. Klimt places her at the centre of everything, visually and symbolically, as if, at that moment, she were the only thing that existed. The world around her fades away, and what remains is the simple, the powerful fact of a body carrying a life.



The Kiss by Gustav Klimt, 1907–1908

The woman's look, almost defiant, suggests that fragility is not something to be hidden, but something to be acknowledged with honesty and courage. The painting refuses to idealize pregnancy, instead, it reveals its vulnerability, its risk, its profound emotional and physical exposure.

This interplay between radiance and exposure also shapes *The Kiss* (1907–1908), although in a more subtle and intimate register. Often considered Klimt's most famous painting, it carries this tension with extraordinary delicacy.

The lovers appear enveloped in gold and in themselves, protected by a shimmering mantle of ornament. Yet, they stand on the edge of a narrow, flowered ledge, beyond which the background dissolves into an undefined void. Their embrace, usually read as secure, is in fact balanced on instability.

The woman's closed eyes and tilted head express surrender, but also the vulnerability inherent in allowing oneself to be held.

The gold that surrounds them dazzles, but it also softens the space around their bodies, making them appear almost weightless. Instead of grounding them, it creates the sense that they could slip into the decorative surface that holds them.

In Klimt's hands, ornament becomes a metaphor for exposure, a surface that reveals more than it hides.

The geometric patterns on the man's robe, mostly rectangles and straight-edged forms, contrast with the soft circles and spirals that cover the woman's dressing. This difference reinforces their separateness, even in a moment of union.

His shapes feel structured and rigid, hers feel fluid and organic. The embrace is intimate, but not absolute. Fragility lies in the space between them, in the impossibility of complete fusion, in the way two distinct worlds meet without ever fully becoming one.

Klimt never treats fragility as misery. Instead, he transforms it into radiance.

His gold is not a shield, but a light that reveals. His attention to detail, every line, every pattern,

every gesture, is a way of honoring what holds existence together.

To look at his work through his eyes is to see it not as decorative, but as deeply human. It is to understand that beauty, for him, is inseparable from vulnerability, that intimacy is inseparable from risk.

He teaches us that fragility is not something to overcome, but something to recognize, something that makes us luminous, connected and real.



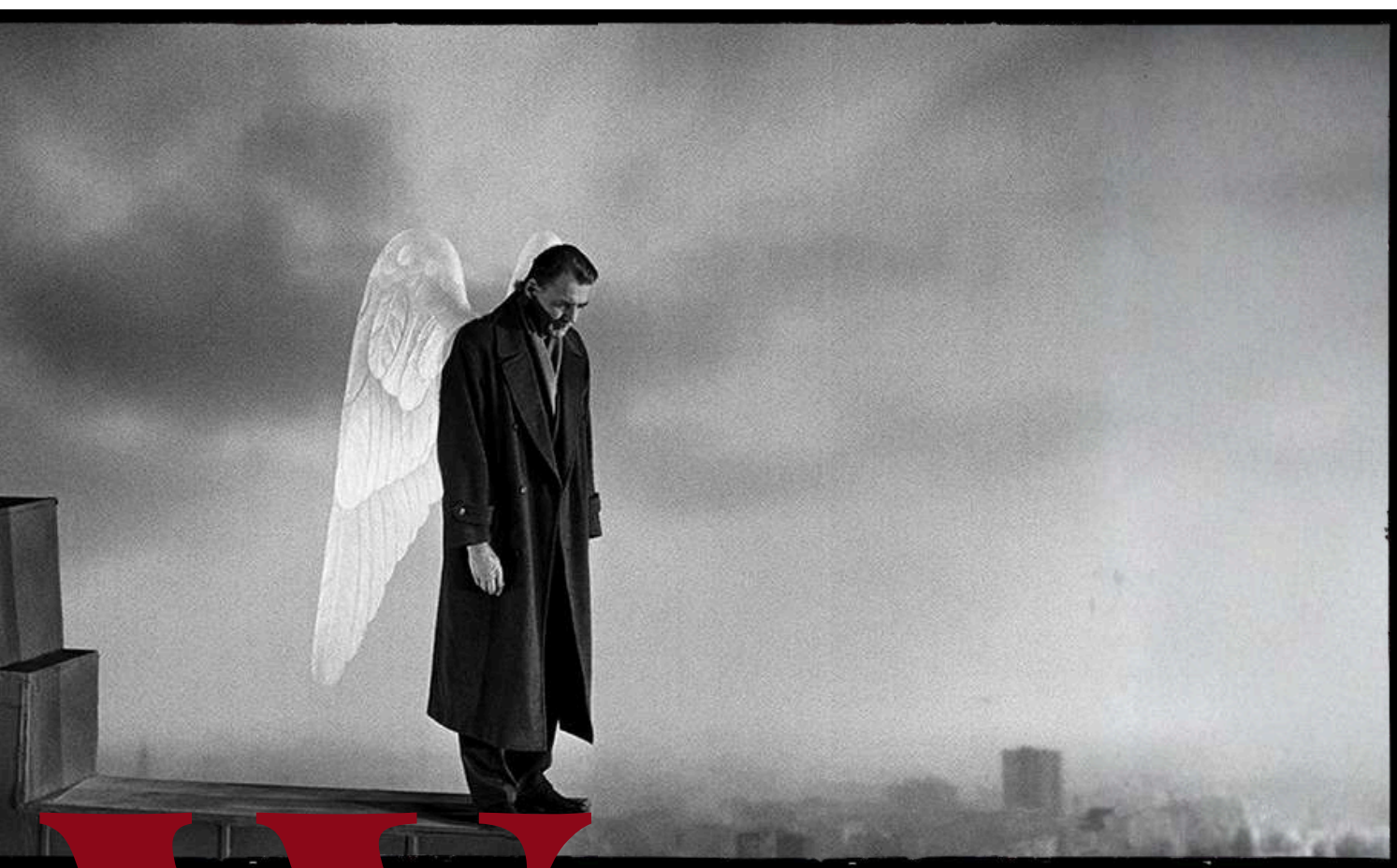
Death and Life by Gustav Klimt, 1915



The Virgin by Gustav Klimt, 1913



Gustav Klimt, Vienna, 1910



W FRAGILITY IN THE CINEMA OF IM WENDERS

BY FILIPA TORRES

In an age of a restless search for perfection and constant stimulation, what does it mean to *let things linger*?

It is precisely in this world shaped by speed, noise and constant distraction that Wim Wenders appears as a form of resistance, encouraging attention and care instead.

His films often feel like a reality check, an opportunity to sit with our feelings, suggesting a state of being that can and should feel intuitively comfortable with the imperfection of human experience. In other words, he helps us find meaning in fragility.

Indeed, *fragility* in Wenders is not about breaking, but about being permeable to life, to experience, and to feeling things, even when it hurts the most.

This is perfectly visible in the way he often frames silence, movement, and landscapes, with his characters often walking, wandering around, and listening more than they speak.

Across three films in particular: *Paris, Texas*, *Perfect Days*, and *Wings of Desire* - Wenders explores different forms of fragility: the fragility of expression and connection, the fragility of attention, and, last but certainly not least, the fragility of existence itself.



Paris, Texas by Wim Wenders, 1984

**PARIS, TEXAS:
FRAGILITY IN THE SPACE
BETWEEN PEOPLE**

The first image we get from Paris, Texas is perfectly clear: a man walking alone through the desert, as if from nowhere.

Travis isn't introduced as openly broken, but rather as *missing*, from his own life and from language itself. That silence is where Wenders locates fragility: in the gap between what we feel and what we can say.

As Travis slowly re-enters the world, reconnecting with his brother and later with his son, the film evidently builds around a distance that gradually tries to close, not just physically, but emotionally.

Even when the characters get closer, conversations are hesitant and incomplete, still carrying a past that cannot be fully expressed, but awakened by a present attachment that feels as unconditional, despite it all.

The tension leads to the film's famous one-way mirror scene between Travis and his past lover Jane. Here, for the first time, he is able to speak openly and honestly, to tell the truth he could not tell before, simply as it is, with acceptance. Yet, they remain separated by glass, seeing each other but unable to touch.

This is the point where fragility fully reveals itself: it is recognized, connection is possible, but never fully reached.

What follows is not reconciliation in the traditional sense, and this is where the meaning of the film becomes clear.

Travis does not try to reclaim what was lost, he just wants his son and Jane to have what he and she could not. There is something like grace in this gesture, an acceptance of limits, rather than an attempt to overcome them.

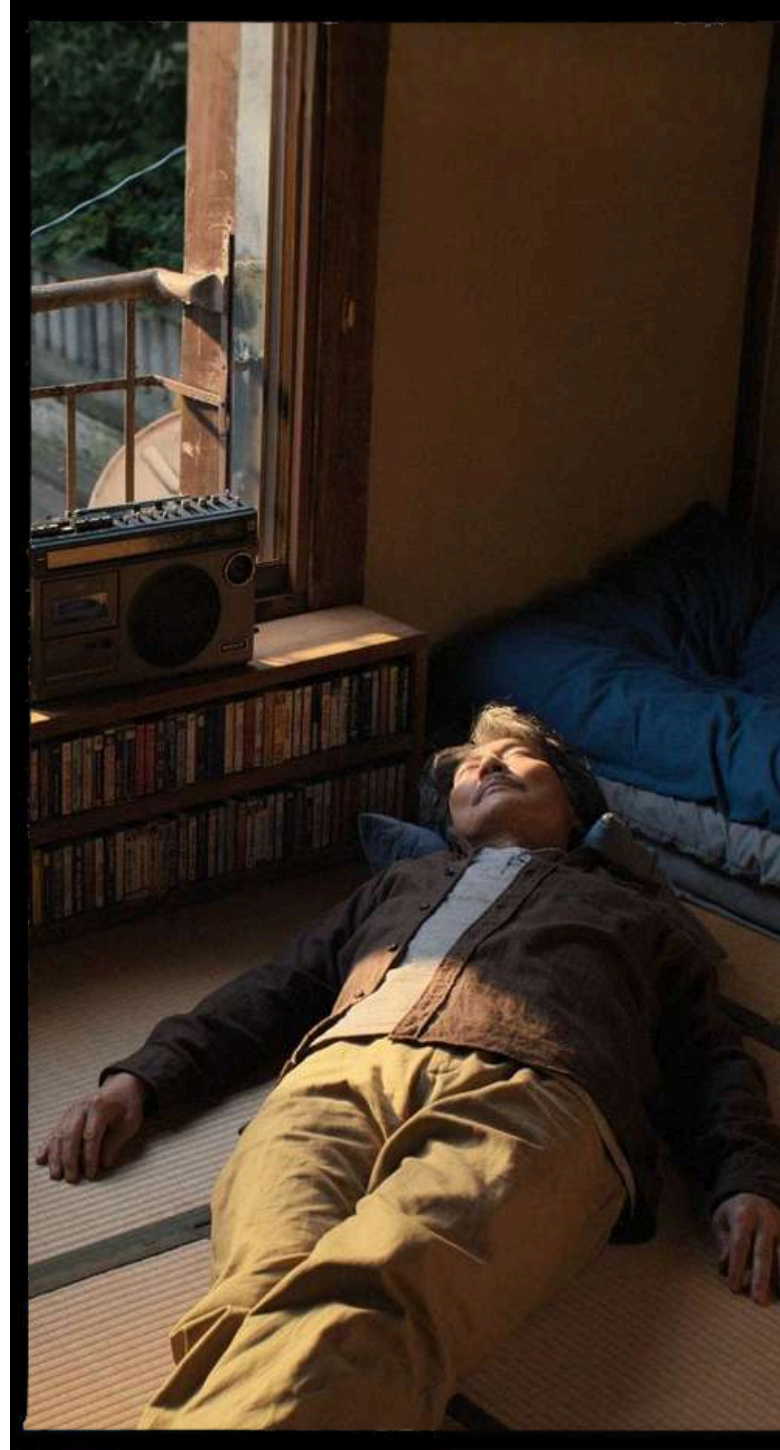
In essence, Wenders does not seek to repair what is broken, but to show that love can persist even in its absence: the acceptance of *fragility* as a condition for tenderness.



**PERFECT DAYS:
FRAGILITY IN ATTENTION
AND EVERYDAY MOMENTS**

In *Perfect Days*, fragility is framed as a way of seeing and living, almost as a discipline. The film follows Hirayama, a man whose life is built around routine and attention to small details, in direct contrast with the world of constant overstimulation in which he lives. Here, what feels fragile is not emotion and expression, but attention itself.

It's no accident that Hirayama favors analogue technology over digital. Hirayama's ascetic existence is stripped back to the basics: music played on collected cassette tapes, second-hand books bought from the budget section of the local bookstore, a point-and-shoot film camera with which he selectively captures the things that please him, particularly almost unnoticeable yet tender details, such as the light moving through trees.



Perfect Days by Wim Wenders, 2023

In this way, Hirayama insists on being present, regardless of hints of loneliness or a past we do not fully understand. He does not try to resolve them, that is not the point. Instead, he returns, again and again, to the present.

Fragility here lies in how easily these moments can pass unnoticed. It becomes something to protect, the ability to care, pay attention and remain open.



Wings of Desire by Wim Wenders, 1987



WINGS OF DESIRE: FRAGILITY AS THE CONDITION OF BEING ALIVE

In *Wings of Desire*, fragility becomes existential, and the film perhaps asks the most radical question of the three: *what if vulnerability were not the cost of being human, but the very gift*

?

The story follows angels who observe and move through Berlin, a city still divided, listening to the inner thoughts of people on trams, in libraries and on rooftops. The angels observe and witness human pain and desire but cannot participate nor can they be touched.

This distance makes human life, with all its imperfections, appear precious to them. Their longing to fall into humanity is a longing to embrace fragility itself. When Daniel chooses to become human, he chooses exactly that: the risk and joy of touch, taste, and uncertainty.

This transformation from being a mere observer of life reframes *fragility* as a privilege of being alive: to bleed, to age, to love, to lose, to be remembered.



Paris, Texas by Wim Wenders, 1984

To conclude, across these three films, *fragility* is shown to take many forms. It begins as something painful but necessary to accept, becomes something to practice and protect, and finally reveals itself as essential to being human.

In an inherently fragmented world, Wenders's cinema feels more relevant than ever. To watch his films is, in a way, a reminder of how naturally we can embrace fragility: by slowing down, accepting it as an underlying human condition, and taking it as an opportunity, rather than constantly trying to fix it.

To cite *Leonard Cohen*:

“

*There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in*

”



Wim Wenders on the set for *Paris, Texas*, in 1984

MUSIC

THE FRAGILITY BEHIND

BY FILIPA TORRES

BY LEONOR HOMEM

Fragility is “the quality of being easily damaged or broken.” Although this definition suggests that damage is almost inevitable, there is also beauty in the ability to be vulnerable and sensitive to life. Music, as an artistic expression of human perspectives and emotions, relies precisely on this exposure. What would it be without real, fragile human reflections

?

Although today’s music is often seen as a passive form of entertainment, many songs we listen to every day reflect years of personal, and delicate experiences, mirrored into instruments and voices.

“Bohemian Rhapsody (1975)” is a perfect example of the advantages of vulnerability in musical expression. Freddie Mercury started working on it back in the 1960’s, later deciding to join 3 different songs he would occasionally work on when warming up with the band. With around 5 minutes and 55 seconds, Queen had problems trying to publish it, being told that it was not commercial enough and too long to pass on the radio, but the band refused to shorten it, deciding to find alternative ways to publish it.

Rather than a form of entertainment, Queen likely knew that the song would hold more value being listened to as a whole, and therefore decided that the expression of the song was more important than its commercial success.

Queen Bohemian Rhapsody Vinyl



Queen



Meat Loaf

Concert

Furthermore, although the meaning of the song has been highly debatable and the band agreed to keep it private, many people have pointed out how it was likely a way of Mercury dealing with his personal problems and exposing himself as a new person.

This song is interpreted as his coming out as gay, in a time where it was still very uncommon for artists to do so. This fragility can also be seen in some of Queen's softer songs, such as "Love of My Life (1975)" from the same album. Freddie Mercury sings about the anguish and profound loss he feels, inspired by his recent separation from his enduring relationship.

This song is a plea for his lover to return, reflecting how fragility plays a major role in the successful connection with the audience.

While *fragility* is often associated with softness and delicacy, it can also be expressed in energetic and passionate ways.

An example is U2. Their song "Stuck in a Moment You Can't Get Out Of (2000)" is an imaginary debate between Bono (the lead singer) and his late friend who committed suicide in 1997.

During the discussion, he tries to convince his friend to stay and fight his battles, urging him to get out of his slump. However, instead of this song being slow and quiet, it is fast paced and loud, made to represent the despair and frustration that Bono re-lives when trying to save his friend.

Another example is Meat Loaf, famous for his hit "I'd Do Anything for Love (But I won't Do That) (1993)".

U2



Concert Meat Loaf

His songs can be characterized by dramatic and theatrical ballads which incorporate rock-style intensity, but are almost all related to vulnerable teenage passion, doomed romance and rebellion. *Fragility* does not have to be considered a flaw, but perhaps an advantage which many artists took for inspiration and used in order to bond with their listeners. The importance of musicians in the narrative of "Fragility Behind Music" is major, but we, as listeners, also show great impact to what we receive. Emotionally and physically, we are very receptive to sound. Reflecting on what people have exposed to the audience through lyrics and stories demonstrates empathy, and being able to associate with artists' feelings through music leaves us open to changes in our own disposition.

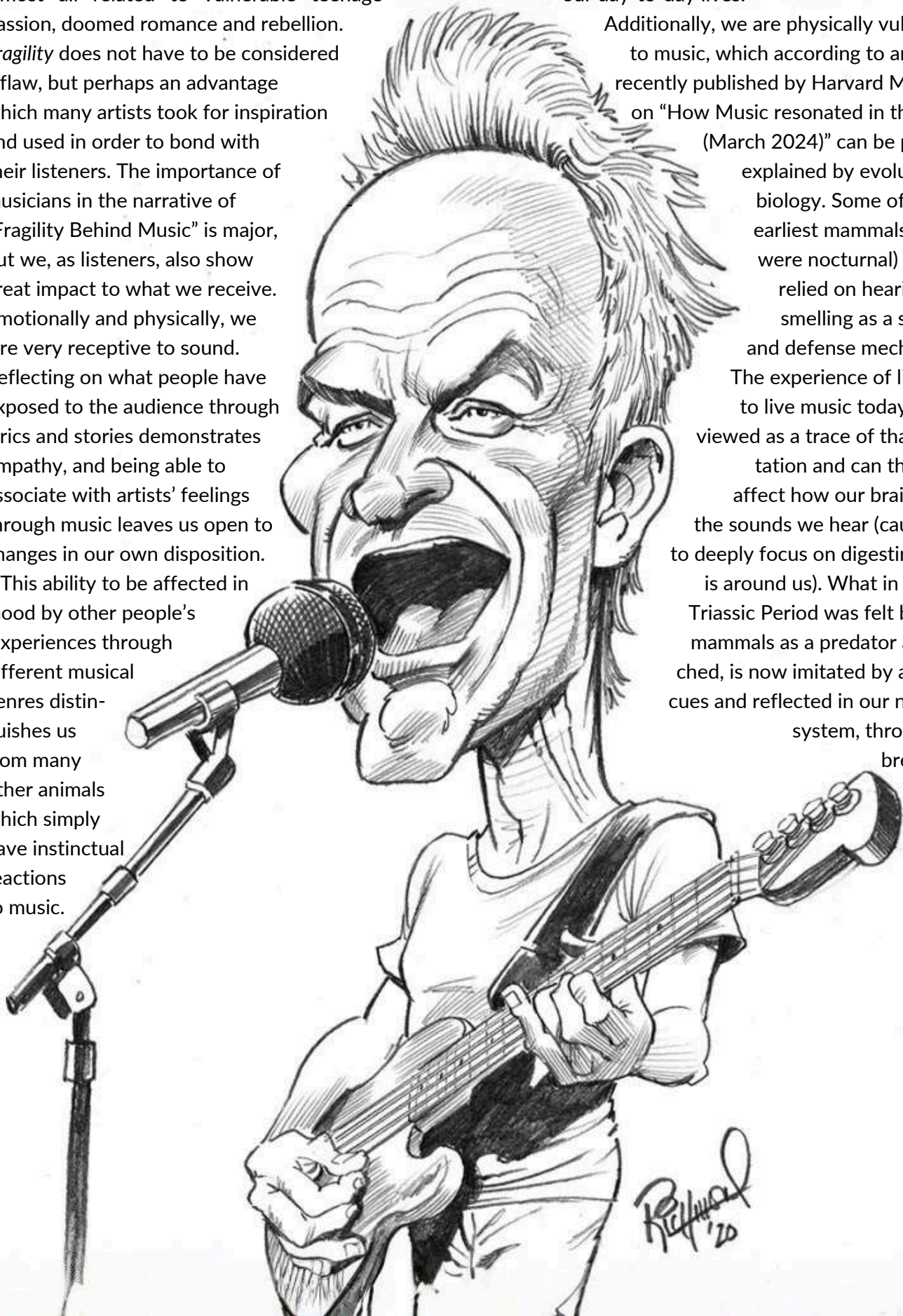
This ability to be affected in mood by other people's experiences through different musical genres distinguishes us from many other animals which simply have instinctual reactions to music.

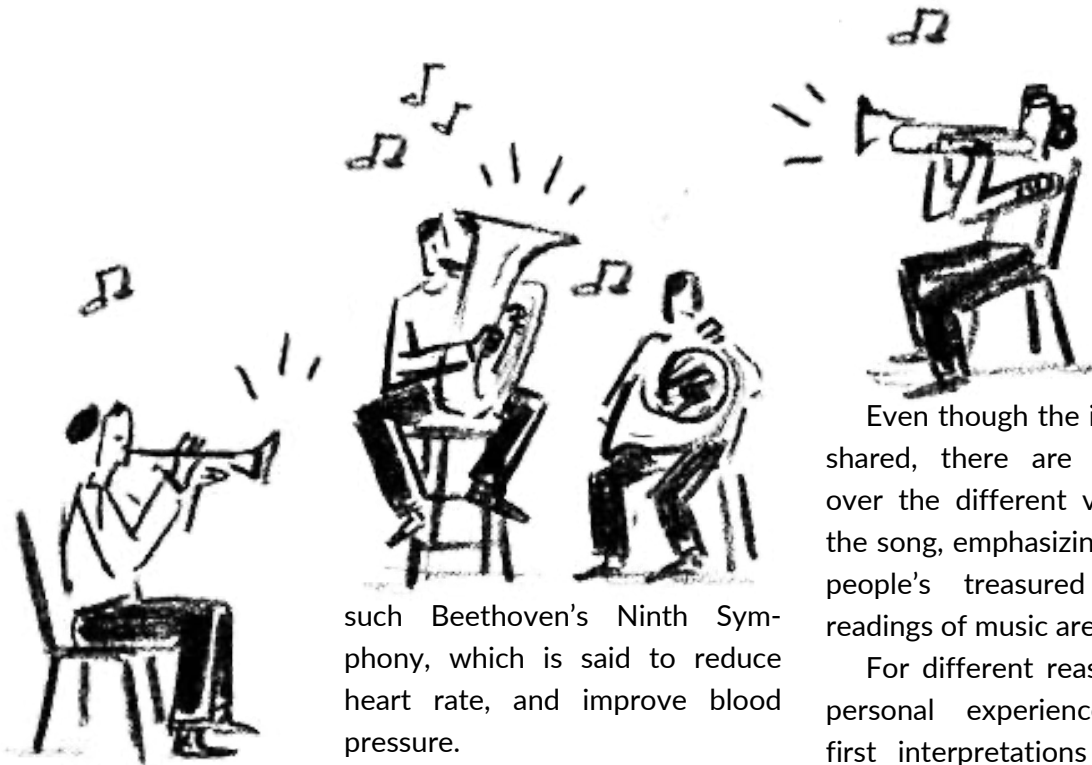
It emphasizes that for us, it is shared language we use to express feelings such as love, frustration, and despair which we feel in our day-to-day lives.

Additionally, we are physically vulnerable to music, which according to an article recently published by Harvard Medicine on "How Music resonated in the Brain (March 2024)" can be partially

explained by evolutionary biology. Some of Earth's earliest mammals (which were nocturnal) heavily relied on hearing and smelling as a survival and defense mechanism.

The experience of listening to live music today can be viewed as a trace of that adaptation and can therefore affect how our brains filter the sounds we hear (causing us to deeply focus on digesting what is around us). What in the late Triassic Period was felt by small mammals as a predator approached, is now imitated by acoustic cues and reflected in our nervous system, through our breathing and heart rate.





We are therefore vulnerable and influenced by the sounds around us, an example being “Cornfield Chase (2014)” played by Hans Zimmer for *Interstellar*.

The use of organ tones creates physical vibrations through the body, the harmonic movements can alter breathing, and the time-based repetition induces a suspense state.

Not only are we therefore easily emotionally influenced by music and instrumental cohesion, as there is evidence that music can act as therapy for physical complications such as epileptic seizures.

More specifically, as Harvard’s article mentions: “listening to Mozart’s Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major can reduce the frequency of seizures in some people with epilepsy”.

Other examples of the physical effects of classical music can be seen through other compositions,

such as Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which is said to reduce heart rate, and improve blood pressure.

These examples show how uncontrollably influenced we are by sound, even when we aren’t actively interpreting or connecting to the lyrical parts of music.

Beyond how music affects our bodies, fragility is also visible in how we interpret what we hear.

Listening to a piece and becoming familiar with it is a different process for many people, and there is almost always space for opinion.

It could be in terms of appreciation (whether they enjoy it or not), lyrical interpretation (what they understand rationally from the song), intention of it, and more. “Every Breath you Take (1983)” is an example of this.

It was commonly misinterpreted, and still is, as romantic story, but the songwriter (Sting) later confirmed it was intended as a reflection of an unsettling and controlling relationship.

Even though the intention was shared, there are still debates over the different viewpoints of the song, emphasizing how fragile people’s treasured ideas and readings of music are.

For different reasons, such as personal experiences, people’s first interpretations might have been different.

For example, some people might have associated it with a relationship between parents and kids, relating it to their own parental experiences.

Therefore, people prefer to have a sentimental attachment to what they feel, rather than assuming the most rational meaning.

Ultimately, music is the fruit of our sensitivity in life, bringing us together through a shared appreciation for genuine and heartfelt musical expression.

It is not a weakness, but a source of authenticity, which impacts us in an emotional and physical way. Rather than representing the flaws of human vulnerability, embracing it helps music survive, acting as a safe space for fragility and allowing artists to express themselves in ways listeners can relate and reflect on.

BY MATILDE LOPES

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NOAH KAHAN

ON FRAGILITY



Noah Kahan for Rolling Stone, by Danny Clinch

1 in every 45 people worldwide suffer with combined addiction, alcohol and drugs, which makes it less of a number and more of a mirror: something uncomfortably close, quietly woven into everyday lives.

When we think about its portrayal in mainstream media, it might feel like a far-away scenario which evokes little to no emotion apart from empathy (hopefully).

There is one artist, however, who depicts the life of being that 1 in 45 in a way that might just spark something within the listener that they had never felt before – a glimpse into the tenuity of instability and addiction.

Vermont-born singer-songwriter Noah Kahan has built a career on quiet confession, blending folk, pop, and indie influences into songs that trace the contours of small-town life, mental health, and the slow, often uncomfortable process of growing up. His music doesn't just describe these experiences—it lingers in them, turning private struggles into something unavoidably shared.

This April, he has just come out with his third album “The Great Divide”, igniting once again his fanbase with his brutal vulnerability.

Kahan has always been open about his struggles with addiction, scattering around references to alcohol and drug abuse through his songs.

Sometimes it's a direct mention to his harmful habits, linking them to his early years' struggles with anxiety and other mental disorders, while other times it comes off as a warning tale of what it does to relationships.

Being in a state of constant non-sobriety to a point where you get used to it taints your view of

the world just enough to make you feel like something's changed, but not enough have it actually be any different.

“

*Half as drunk as I thought I'd be
by now, that's good
I can still see the people around
me change shape”*

— 23

”

As described in multiple of his lyrics, addiction takes a toll on everyone around him.

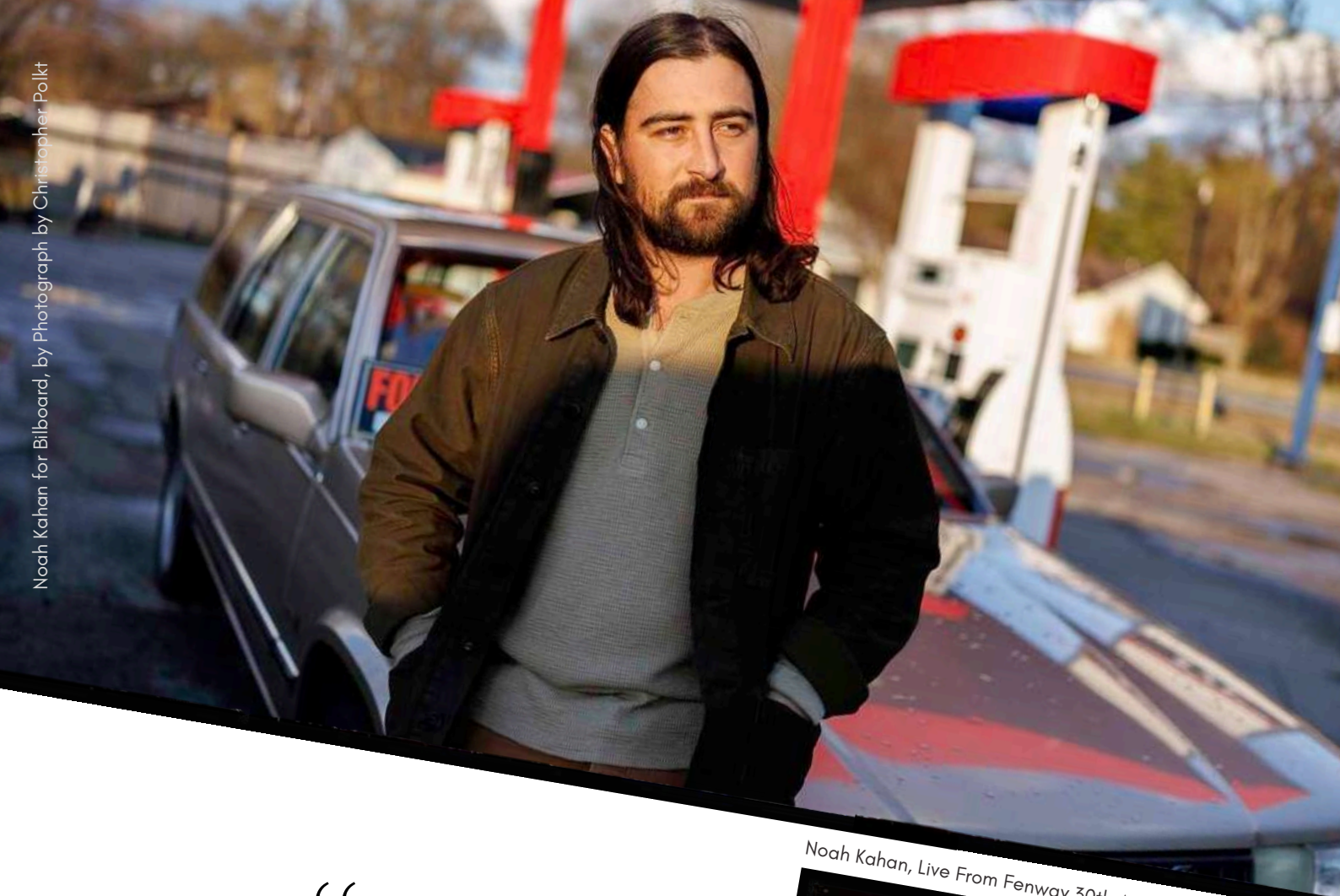
Through Kahan's music, we are able to have a glimpse into the dynamics of forming bonds with someone who battles with putting down a bottle.

Some of his songs, like “You're Gonna Go Far” and “Orange Juice”, mention the need one faces to distance themselves from the situation and the person in question.

We see this being portrayed from the addict's perspective most of the time, a fragile take on self-preservation and love.



Noah Kahan for Rolling Stone, by Danny Clinch



“

*It makes me smile to know
when things get hard
Oh, you'll be far [...]
You're the greatest thing
we've lost*

”

-You're Gonna Go Far

Many of his songs mention this quiet understanding that space is required. There is a common theme of one party leaving to do greater things, or get better, while the other stays behind, stuck in their small town – which might also be interpreted as being frozen in their mental situation as the other person moves on.

Noah Kahan, Live From Fenway 30th August 2025





Noah Kahan for Rolling Stone, by Danny Clinch

While in most of them the subject shows compassion and encouragement for the other's journey, recognizing the urgency for change, in some there's a break in character and the emotions come raining down like a stomach emptying itself.

It shows that the lyricist is not concerned with saying the right thing or appearing morally correct.

“

*Are we all just crows
to you now?
Are we all just pullin'
you down?”*

”

-Orange Juice

The brittleness in Kahan's art comes from his ability to open up and speak freely of his internal conflicts in a way that combines the artistry of words with the musicality of folk in a melodic drive through the cold and gloomy northeast.

It's not just another mention of empty cups and broken hearts – it's a deep dive into a mind tainted by anxious pacing, sadness and repetitive harmful behaviours.

Still, it's also a journey through what love can feel like, even if impaired by toxins and heavy smoke.

In its own way, it's beautiful for what it shows and for what it makes you feel – even if your blood's pristine and your lungs are clean.

“

*If you get too close
And I'm not how you hoped
Forgive my northern attitude
Oh, I was raised out in the cold.*

”

-Northern Attitude

“

*And I divvied up my anger into
30 separate parts
Keep the bad shit in my liver
and the rest around my heart*

-Growing Sideways

”

“

*And memories are something
even smoking weed does not
replace
And I am terrified of weather
'cause I see you when it rains*

-Stick Season

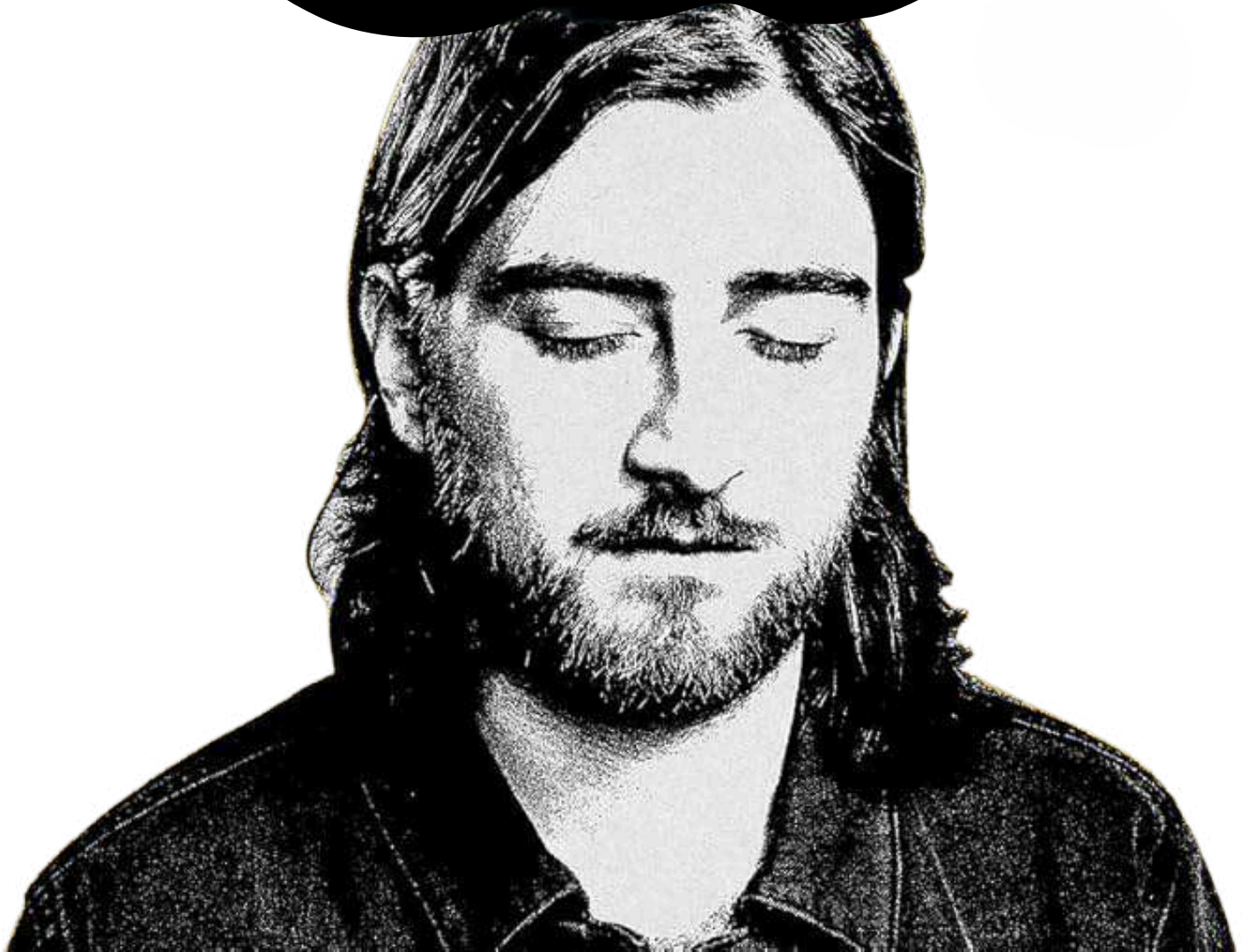
”

“

*I drink 'till I drown and I
smoke 'till I'm burning*

”

-Halloween



THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC

BY INÊS REBELO



Spring 2026

It was three summers ago, that I had my first eye opening experience as to what life could be without mobile phones constantly available. I went with my then best-friend to a summer camp where no phones were allowed unless for 45 minutes a day, for parent calling and similar purposes. The first day was tough. I had this overwhelming feeling of incompleteness and was experiencing some degree of anxiety and discomfort. Naturally, when phone time was finally available, I was very punctually on the cue. During the second day the symptoms were similar, just less intense, and on the third day I no longer looked forward for those 45 minutes.

It was on the fourth day that I questioned if it would really make sense to get the phone when time arrived and then I looked at the phone for what it really is: a combination of screen and wires, with no real value or significant appeal. On that day, when I opened TikTok and scrolled through three

videos, I stopped and laughed at myself – I had internalized how pathetic and meaningless it is to spend valuable time on these apps.

At the end of the week, I was promising myself to never fall back on the social media trap again, as life could be so much more interesting when I was actually in the moment. Unfortunately, frustrating me, as time went by I fell back into old patterns, but having experienced that week was inspiring.

Without technological distractions, being present in the activities was effortless and natural. Our day was composed of religious activities, sports, and community building, and conversations were diverse, easy and meaningful. There was no urgency in retaining the other person's attention, we had the whole afternoon to spare and it was the calmer, more self-connected and complete I had felt in recent years. Getting away from my bubble and experiencing life in a different way was really a turning point for me, so much so that this week shaped me into a new version of myself.

Read 1w ago

Now that I grabbed your attention (or at least I hope), let's get to the "loneliness epidemic" topic.

There are three vital components of social connection: structure, function and quality.

The first refers to the number and variety of relationships one has, and how often interaction with others occurs.

The second is about the extent to what the relationships serve various needs.

Finally, quality is the degree to which the relationships and interactions are felt by individuals, positive, helpful, or satisfying, or the other way around.

It is worth to note that the amount and quality of social connection is dynamic and expected to change over time, being enhanced or threatened by the most diverse reasons. However, the time spent on one end of the continuum (isolation or connection), is decisive to one's relationship patterns and mental health.

Brief feelings of loneliness and solitude may serve as a reminder to cultivate connections and spend time with loved ones. On the contrary, chronic loneliness and isolation are faced as a serious health concern and can be destructive for one's self esteem.

As communications methods evolve and the need to be face to face with people to maintain relationships disappears, society is becoming less and less socially connected. At a time when communication is so effortlessly available, you would think the trend would be otherwise, but no two-minute chat will build a friendship the way that a coffee break or dinner do.

This is a two-way street - technology developments make contact easier but are also a major attention shifter.

"The Attention Economy" is a system in which human attention, a scarce and valuable resource, is treated as a commodity and companies compete for its capture and retention. "If you're not paying, you are the product" is a commonly used expression to summarize the mechanism: by using personalized algorithms to keep users engaged for longer periods, social media apps monetize the attention, selling it to advertisers.

Nevertheless, all the algorithms in the world couldn't hide the simple fact that

**“ a wealth of information
creates a poverty of attention,
and a need to allocate that
attention efficiently ”**

as stated by Herbert A. Simon, an American economist, in the late 1960s.

After scrolling for 10 tiktoks, it is very unlikely that you remember what they were all about, and that speaks for itself: we are selling our time away for peanuts.

Many times we hear "time is money", but more importantly time is life. Each second one spends watching random people's lives and comparing oneself to impossible and unrealistic standards, is time of life lost that will never come back.



How shocking and horrifying is it to get the screen time notification and realize we've spent too many hours of our week giving our attention away to something that does not add any value? In the short term we feel the concern, but the feeling of urgent change isn't really there.

However, if we look at this in a longer-term perspective, it's easy to grasp how many opportunities and connections are slipping by.

The game is rigged, and doom scrolling doesn't happen by chance. Teams of engineers, behavioral psychologists, and data scientists dedicate their lives to make these apps as addictive as possible, and study to the limit how can they extract more time from the users.

A newspaper ends, a series' episode has the final credits, but the scroll is infinite. Work and/or studies, transportation, house-keeping, cooking, exercising, reading, being socially active, and so on, requires calendar stretching on itself.

With the addition of a powerful, addictive tool whose whole point is to drain you in as much as it can, is no wonder so many people feel suffocated.

Since the pandemic we have experienced a shift in human contact, triggered by normalizing physical distance and greatly developing digital-only communication.

The consequences are still seen and felt, as the isolation people felt at the time was internalized and impacts communication and social skills to this day. Combined with a mobile phone available 24/7, consequences are dramatically amplified.

Let's take April 28th 2025 as an example. Portugal was affected by a blackout that left people with no electricity and communication means, as the network went down. With no mobile phone, no TV, no computer, we were faced with the need to entertain ourselves with something else.

Gatherings were seen all over the country, neighbours were connecting with each other, friends who hadn't connected for a long time found each other at the local spots.

When there's no way to work and no internet, people actually have the time to meet one another and just sit and talk for hours. One year later, many claim that was one of the best days of their lives.



What made that day so unique was the community feeling, like

something that had been asleep for so long had finally awakened.

The irony is, we could have that every day.

All it takes is for us to drop the phones and prioritize people over screens.

As humans, we crave social connection and the feeling of belonging, and there's nothing in this world that can cover that up.

Run Clubs are so famous now for that exact reason: joining sports and community, they represent the perfect combination for a meaning-seeking and socially hungry society.

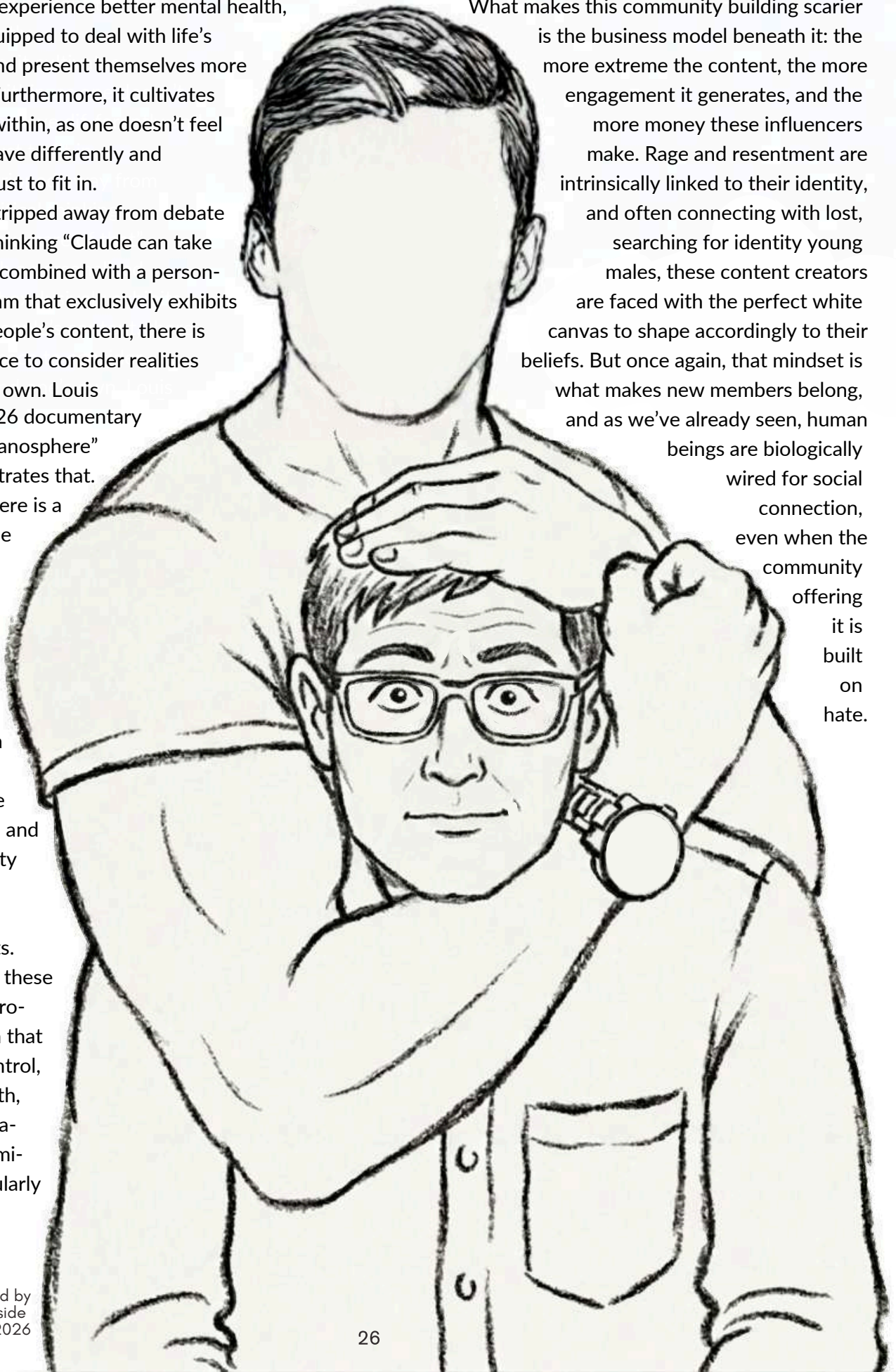
But community is not only about knowing you have other people to rely on. It's about sharing experiences, points of view, opportunities, and learnings, which translates to a more empathic, open minded, and tolerant society.

People who are surrounded by a supportive environment experience better mental health, are better equipped to deal with life's adversities, and present themselves more confidently. Furthermore, it cultivates authenticity within, as one doesn't feel it has to behave differently and accordingly, just to fit in.

As one is stripped away from debate and critical thinking "Claude can take care of that", combined with a personalized algorithm that exclusively exhibits likeminded people's content, there is not much space to consider realities beyond one's own. Louis Theroux's 2026 documentary "Inside the Manosphere" perfectly illustrates that.

The manosphere is a term for online communities that spread harmful and aggressive views about what it means to be a man, and the false narrative that feminism and gender equality come at the expense of men's rights. Influencers in these ecosystems promote the idea that emotional control, material wealth, physical appearance and dominance, particularly over women,

are the true determinants of male worth. What makes this community building scarier is the business model beneath it: the more extreme the content, the more engagement it generates, and the more money these influencers make. Rage and resentment are intrinsically linked to their identity, and often connecting with lost, searching for identity young males, these content creators are faced with the perfect white canvas to shape accordingly to their beliefs. But once again, that mindset is what makes new members belong, and as we've already seen, human beings are biologically wired for social connection, even when the community offering it is built on hate.



“
*When everyone
 thinks alike, no one
 thinks much*”

was a sentence I read in a book some years ago and it stayed with me.

The “loneliness epidemic” can also serve as a partial explanation for the growing number of extremist political parties’ supporters. It is known that isolated individuals are more prone to take radical actions, as they blame the world or some particular group of people for their disgrace.

As seen above, they are also more susceptible to connect with others in similar situations, joined by hate or rebellion.

By doing so, they are failing at experiencing other ways of life, making them stay in their bubble, polarizing them further.

A Harvard survey conducted in October 2025 pointed out that technology, feeling overworked or too tired, and living in a society that is too individualistic are viewed by 73%, 62% and 58% of the surveyed, respectively, as one of the leading causes of loneliness in America.

And yet, knowing the causes has not been enough.

The good news is society is more and more aware of the need of an attention shift and it’s acting on it.

Social clubs and events are more common and promoted than ever, mental health is increasingly destigmatized, and a growing number of individuals is seeking help.

But here is the uncomfortable truth: you already knew most of this before you started reading.

It is, after all, common sense, and we are not short on information.

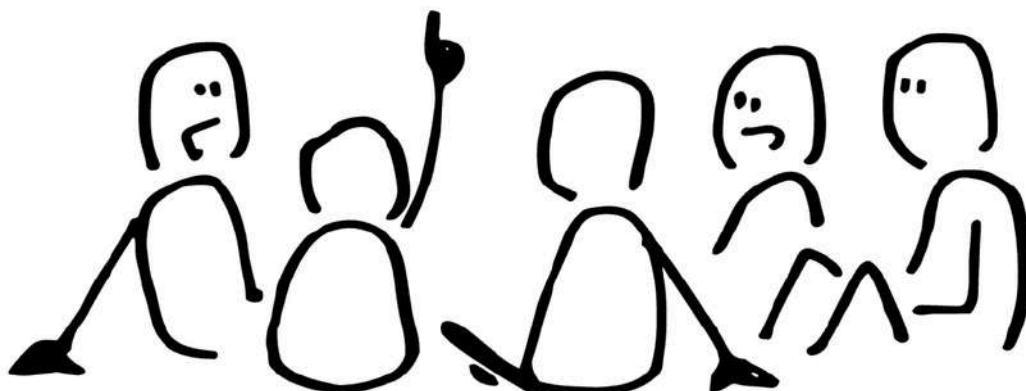
What is harder, and no article can do for you, is sitting with the weight of what is being lost every time we reach for the phone out of habit rather than necessity.

Think not of time wasted, but of specific moments: a conversation that never deepened, a thought that never fully formed, a connection that almost happened.

The loneliness epidemic will not be solved by awareness alone, but rather quietly and individually, in the moment each one of us decides our attention is worth more than we have been giving it away for.

Schedule a coffee with a friend you haven’t spoken to in a while, talk with your parents while they’re making dinner, leave your house with your phone in your bag, rather than in your hand.

Engage your creativity, exercise, read, draw. In a world engineered to fragment your focus, choosing presence and leaving auto-pilot mode is the ultimate radical statement.





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